

American Civil Religion Virtual Gallery Walk

American Civil Religion didn't start with the War of 1812, but it was really the first time that it became a recognizable "thing" in American life. Americans started feeling nationalist, and there started to be a more significant move towards enshrining symbols of our country. So what is Civil Religion? The Sociologist Robert Bellah described it as an embrace of fundamental beliefs, rituals, holidays, values that is separate from a chosen (or not) religion.

Watch: ["The American Flag is a Religious Symbol"](#)

Respond: Sociologist Emile Durkheim said the flag was an example of totemism. What does it mean to be a "totem?"

Nativist George Balch thought immigrants needed "patriotic education" in order to civilize them. Thus using schools as a method to teach these thoughts, it would assimilate them into American culture. Balch's clearly racist views aside, **do you feel that patriotic observances in schools help assimilate immigrants or not? Explain.**

Colin Kaepernick knelt during the Nation Anthem, and was both vilified and celebrated through this rejection of Civil Religion norms. **Your opinion, do you think he was in the right to do this, or was his action the wrong place for the protest?**

Watch: ["What's Actually in the US Flag Code?"](#)

Now Peruse the [U.S. Flag Code](#)

Respond: First off - **were you in any way aware of the US Flag Code prior to being asked to watch the video and then read the code?**

What are three elements of the Flag Code that you find more or less "agreeable" with your own personal feelings? Why are you supportive of these?

What are three elements of the Flag Code that you personally find more or less unnecessary or wrong? Why?

Watch: "[The Cold War Origins of 'In God We Trust'](#)"

Respond: Part of the American Civil Religion connects to actual belief in the divine - that belief in God itself is a American virtue, and that atheism is an anti-American trait. **Why did this come to be?**

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Above is the United States Pledge of Allegiance. Included in the pledge is the phrase "under God." Does that make the pledge religious, or only Civil Religion? The Supreme Court has discussed the concept of "Ceremonial Deism" which means that certain religious expressions might lose their religious overtones through repetition. But how would they decide? Please respond with your thoughts: **Does the Pledge in 2024 come off as religious to you or not?**

View this [Photo](#)

The image linked above is of the Capitol Rotunda in Washington D.C., and the artwork on the ceiling is called "Apotheosis of George Washington" which means, Washington has become a god. Is there Civil Religion in our historic government buildings and monuments? Many people would place things like the White House, the Capitol Building, the Lincoln Memorial, the Jefferson Memorial, the Washington Memorial, as well as the many War monuments around the country as examples of buildings that have a reverence around them. Are they American shrines? **Do you agree with this idea or no? Explain.**

It has also been discussed that certain individuals in American history have taken on an almost mythic quality and are sort of "saints" in the country. Certain historical figures (or current figures) have a certain holiness when we discuss them. **Who comes to mind for you on this concept and why?**